

## PrEP

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is for individuals who have HIV positive sexual or needle sharing partners. The medication is taken daily to lower the chances of becoming HIV infected. Daily PrEP reduces the risk of HIV Transmission among people who inject drugs, is reduced by more than 70%. The risk of getting HIV during sex can be reduced by more than 90% -and even higher, when condoms are used. PrEP is highly effective for preventing HIV, if used consistently as prescribed.

## PEP

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is for individuals who have been exposed to HIV. The PEP drug regimen must be started within 72 hours of exposure to HIV, to prevent becoming infected.

## Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)

Hepatitis C is a blood-borne virus that infects the liver. Most people become infected with HCV by sharing needles or other drug injection equipment. Many baby boomers (people born from 1945 to 1965) may have been infected before testing for the virus was available, so it's important for baby boomers and injection drug users to take a simple blood test for HCV.

Doctors can treat HCV with drug combinations that have a cure rate of 90-100%.

**Counseling and testing for HIV/HCV  
is available for walk-ins and by  
appointment at  
Transforming Reentry Services.**

**10 W. 35th Street, Suite 9C5  
Phone: 312.328.9610  
Fax: 312.328.9611**

[www.transformingreentry.org](http://www.transformingreentry.org)  
[info@transformingreentry.org](mailto:info@transformingreentry.org)



## What is HIV?

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) is spread through blood and sexual body fluids. HIV attacks and destroys the body's immune system, specifically CD4 cells - also known as T-cells, which start the body's response to micro-organisms, such as viruses. T-cells are an essential part of the human immune system for fighting infections and diseases. Untreated, HIV destroys the immune system, especially the number of T-cells in the body. As the number of healthy T-cells decrease and the immune system weakens, the body becomes more at risk for bacterial or opportunistic infections which can make a person sicker, and in severe cases, lead to death.

## How is HIV spread?

Casual contact, mosquitoes, and biting insects do not transmit HIV.

HIV transmission occurs when HIV infected fluids (blood, semen, vaginal fluid or breast milk) from an infected person enters the body of an uninfected person. The most common ways to spread HIV are:

- Through unprotected sex (anal, vaginal, or oral) with an HIV-infected person;
- By sharing needles or other injection equipment with an HIV-infected person;
- From an HIV-infected woman to her baby before or during birth, or through breastfeeding after birth.

Additionally, the presence of sexually transmitted diseases (chlamydia, gonorrhea, viral herpes, and syphilis) increases the likelihood of HIV transmission during sexual contact.

## How can HIV be prevented?

- Abstain from “risky” sexual activities: unprotected vaginal or anal intercourse and oral sex. Engage in nonrisky activities, for example masturbation, massage, hugging, or kissing.
- Practice safer sex. Correctly use a latex or polyurethane condom or dental dam with every sex partner, every time. Products containing Nonoxynol 9 may increase the chance of HIV transmission. Use water-based lubricants to increase comfort and reliability of a condom. Do not use oil-based lubes (Vaseline, massage oils, etc.).
- Limit the number of sex partners you have, and choose partners, who know their HIV status or, you can speak openly with about practicing safer sex.
- Limit the number of sex partners you have and choose partners you can speak openly with about practicing safer sex.
- If you inject any drugs (steroids, hormones, insulin, or anything else), use a new sterile syringe every time. Do not share injection equipment, including cookers, cottons and water.
- Avoid contact with another person's blood
- Untreated STIs increase the risk of becoming HIV infected. Get tested and treated for STIs, including HCV, to decrease the risk of acquiring HIV.

## What is AIDS

AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is a later stage of HIV infection, and is diagnosed by a medical provider when opportunistic infections or cancers take advantage of a weakened immune system.

HIV positive persons, who have not had any opportunistic infections, can receive an AIDS diagnosis, if their T-cells are destroyed or severely weakened by HIV.

## Is there treatment for HIV or AIDS?

As with other diseases, early detection offers more options for treatment and preventive care. Treatments are now available for people exposed to HIV (PrEP) or for people who are having sex or sharing needles with HIV positive partners (PrEP).

For individuals infected with HIV, early treatment and healthy actions can help HIV-positive individuals stay well. Medical treatments can slow the progression of the disease and the rate the immune system is weakened or destroyed.

HIV treatments reduce but do not eliminate the risk of spreading HIV. There are also treatments that can prevent or cure some of the opportunistic infections associated with AIDS; however, there is no cure for HIV/AIDS.